

Wildflowers

Because of the warm, sub-tropical climate, wildflowers can be seen blooming every month of the year at Canaveral National Seashore (CANA). A few of the most likely species to be seen are listed below:

Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*)- This low growing ground cover is one of the most asked about plants in the park. The attractive bicolored red and orange blossoms look like a sunflower that has been painted and can be seen throughout the year in open, sandy areas near the beach.

Beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*)- Similar in form and habitat to blanket flower, the blossom is the typical yellow color of most sunflowers. It too flowers year round.

Coral bean (*Erythrina herbacea*)- The tall, eye-catching clusters of two-inch long curved red flowers are utilized for nectar by hummingbirds. Look for this plant in winter, spring or summer along the edge of wooded areas and thickets.

American beauty berry (*Callicarpa americana*)- A low shrub with clusters of very small, pink flowers. The flowers receive little notice; however, the large purple clusters of berries that appear in late summer and fall are very attractive. For this reason, beauty berry is used as an ornamental plant. It can be seen along the boardwalk trail leading to Turtle Mound.

Prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia stricta*)- Watch out for the long spines! This cactus testifies to the desert-like quality of the coastal dunes. It has large attractive yellow flowers that bloom in the spring and summer. Some years it will bear large amounts of oblong raspberry-colored fruits about 2/3 the size of a golf ball. An introduced moth, whose larvae eat the fleshy pads of the cactus, while not yet recorded at CANA, may be a serious threat to the species.

Lantana (*Lantana camara*)- A shrub with little bouquets of tiny yellow, orange and pink flowers. This is actually an introduced species that is threatening to displace the native lantana (*L. depressa* var. *depressa*) which has yellow flowers when young. Another way to tell the species apart - the leaves of the native lantana appear folded or creased. Both species occur in the vicinity of Turtle Mound.

Spanish Bayonets (*Yucca aloifolia*)- This species is very conspicuous with a stalk of showy white flowers projecting as much as three feet above a basal rosette of stiff, very sharp-pointed leaves. It can be seen in bloom along the backside of the dune in the spring and summer. It is thought to have been originally introduced from Mexico.

Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis latifolia*)- A beautiful, delicate, white, long-petaled lily that reminds one of a long-legged spider or daddy long legs. The plant has long, strap-shaped leaves. Growing in slightly wetter areas of the dunes, it blooms spring through fall.

Seaside Vervain (*Verbena maritima*)- Found only in Florida, it is rare throughout its range, but common at CANA. This low plant has attractive little purple, five-petaled flowers that can be seen in bloom all year long along the beach road north of Eddy Creek.

Standing Cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*)- This flower only occurs in certain locations but is worth seeking out in the summer and fall. It has tall spikes of tubular red flowers, reaching three feet in height, and finely-cut, fern-like leaves. Two spots to see it are the southwestern bank of the Haulover Canal bridge and along the South District beach road north of Parking Area #8.

Moon Flower (*Ipomoea alba*)- You have to get up early to see this one. A white-flowered species of the morning glory family, it has large funnel shaped flowers that bloom at night or early morning. A vine, it can be seen throughout the year climbing on vegetation at the summit of Turtle Mound.

Blue Morning Glory (*Ipomoea pandurata*)- A blue relative of moon flower it blooms during the day and is common on the trail to Turtle Mound and thicket areas in the park.

Railroad Vine (*Ipomoea pes caprae*)- Another member of the morning glory family, it has large pink, funnel-shaped flowers that bloom throughout the year. It is an important member of the sparse plant community that exists in the harsh environment of bare sand in front of the dune. Creeping over the sand like a ever-lengthening strand of rope, it plays an important role in anchoring sand and retarding erosion.

Beach Morning Glory (*Ipomoea imperati*)- Growing in the same area as railroad vine, and trailing over the sand, it also helps to prevent erosion. This species has large, white flowers with a yellow center that bloom from spring through fall.

Many more species can be seen. Inquire at the Visitor Center for plant lists and wildflower guides which cover the CANA area. Please remember that plant collecting is not allowed, "Take only pictures, leave only footprints".